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CIA Is Viewed as a Monster

THE SECRET TEAM. By L. Fletcher Prouty. Prentice Hall. 496 pp. \$8.95.

The Central Intelligence Agency can be portrayed as both monster and myth, depending on who's doing the talking.

At best, it is myth, which Webster defines partly as stemming from "... unknown authorship... serving to explain some phenomenon ... of a people."

At worst, it is a secret government, supplanting the highest reaches of the democratic process, making war wherever and upon whomever it chooses, blundering into disaster after disaster and seeking constantly to put both words — and blame — into the mouths and onto the backs of others.

Which definition is correct? Both are, as Col. Prouty, a retired Air Force officer with years of intimate association with the agency, explains.

The CIA's original goal was intelligence. In many ways the CIA has become quite good at this. But the tentacles of power grow rapidly when hidden as deeply as are the roots and practices of CIA and it is here, Prouty submits with chilling argument, that CIA has become a monster.

The Secret Team, or inner circle, has become so powerful that it can and does literally change the appearance of events with the result that even presidential advisers see only what CIA has contrived, not facts. This, Prouty strongly indicates, is responsible for the disastrous American involvement in Vietnam.

This summary is a good example:

"When a new Assistant Secretary of Defense or Assistant Secretary of State can say in public something like, 'The United States has no combat troops in Laos, and it has not had any there, and it will not have any there,' at least fifteen or twenty other nations can listen and recall that they have at one time or another directly participated in actions that in-

involved American combat troops in Laos; or ... in some other country. In many cases the person who makes such a statement is known either to be uninformed or lying."

There are successes, of course, many of which are not known.

The landing of a CIA plane in Russia and the implementation of highly sensitive listening devices represents a flagrant violation of the borders of a nation. Yet, who can say that the results weren't worth it?

Prouty discusses the Guatemala coup, the Bay of Pigs and the U-2 disasters and other CIA events. But for all his ring of sincerity and accuracy, he is no writer. Seldom has a book been more poorly organized or worse written — terms are either not defined or defined several chapters later; the nuances of agreement between subject and verb es-

cape the author; the redundancy of "close proximity" falls heavy on the ear, as does the new verb "obsoleted" and the misuse of "further" when he means "farther."

The compromise and involvement of the American military by the CIA is nothing less than frightening in a nation where democratic civilian control of the military has been traditional. Yet what the author says about the CIA's infiltration into the role and operations of the Army's Special Forces bears out fully what this reviewer saw more than ten years ago in the Order of Battle plans for Special Forces troops at Ft. Bragg, N. C.

This is a dangerous book — and sadly, a dull one. Its message needs to be read and thoughtfully evaluated by all who have a concern with America and her future.

— JAMES H. HALLDRUP.